DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 030 902 CG 003 987

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The Personality of the Counselor as Measured by the Stern Activities Index.

American Personnel and Guidance Association, Washington, D.C.; South Carolina Univ., Columbia. School of Education.

Pub Date 31 Mar 69

Note-14p.; Paper was presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 31, 1969.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.80

Descriptors-*Counselor Characteristics, Counselor Qualifications, Counselors, *Individual Characteristics, *Measurement, *Personality Assessment, Personality Studies, Personality Tests, Research, *Secondary School Counselors

This study attempts to develop knowledge about personality dimensions of practicing counselors who have varying experiences, training, responsibility and the like. The areas proposed for study were the counselor personality profile on factors measured by the Stern Activities Index and the differences between measured personality dimensions of counselors. The Stern Activity Index was mailed along with a letter of explanation and a general information questionnaire to a random sample of one-half of the Junior and Senior High School Counselors employed in South Carolina. Results indicated that counselors described themselves as socially conservative, interested in intellectual activities, competitive, persevering, and recognizing the need for emotional warmth. An implication from this study was that the field of professional counseling could benefit from better establishing the psychological characteristics of counselors and attempting to keep the most effective counselors in the field. (EK)

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ED 020902

THE PERSONALITY OF THE COUNSELOR AS MEASURED BY THE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX

A Paper Presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, Las Vegas, March 31, 1969

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Personality characteristics of counselors have long been considered important in determining the effective functioning of the person in his role as a counselor and as a guidance practitioner. Literature in the field indicates that much "arm chair" deliberation has occurred and that many lists of desirable characteristics have been formulated and placed in print. These are seldom, however, documented in terms of personality as measured by an instrument assessing dimensions of personality as they relate to demographic characteristics of practicing counselors. Most of the studies using personality measures have attempted to develop a profile or compare the personality of the counselor with other professional groups (Kemp, 1964; Whetstone, 1965; Bohn, 1965; Foley and Proff, 1965) or to measure personality change of a group of counselors as they undergo training (Jones, 1963; Munger, Meyers and Brown, 1963; Patterson, 1967; McCain, 1968; Danielson, 1969). The literature relating to practicing counselors (Dunlop, 1965; Farwell, 1961; Polmantier, 1966) is visually aimed at developing a model based upon the role and personality of counselors as perceived by 'others' and by 'self'. These are vitally important contributions to knowledge about counselors but would seem to need supplementation from an objective study of the demographic description of counselors as related to a standardized measure of personality. This approach becomes even more important if it can be related to counselor effectiveness, discriminate among counselor characteristics and contribute to initial counselor selection and retention.

The present study is an attempt to develop basic knowledge about dimensions of personality of practicing counselors who have varying experience, training, responsibilities and the like. Specifically, two major questions were proposed to be studied. These were:

1. What is the counselor personality profile on factors measured by the Stern Activities Index?

2. What differences exist between the measured personality dimensions of counselors who:

   a. are male and those who are female?

   b. are older (45 and over) and younger (under 45) counselors?

   c. have Master's degrees and those who do not?

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d. have a graduate major in guidance and those having a graduate major other than guidance?

e. have had a practicum experience and those who have not?

f. have had 12 years or less of teaching experience and those with more than 12 years?

g. have had 3 years and less of counseling experience and those with more than 3 years?

h. have full-time guidance assignments and those who have less than full-time?

i. have selected "counselor" as their career choice and those who have selected another choice?

j. are employed in secondary schools with grades 9-12 and those counselors who are employed in schools with grades below 9th?

Method

The Stern Activities Index was mailed along with a letter of explanation and a general information questionnaire to a random sample of one-half of the 713 Junior and Senior High School Counselors employed in South Carolina during the 1967-68 school year. This mailing was one of several phases of a composite study of these counselors which included full and part-time counselors as well as fully and not-fully certified counselors. One hundred and seventeen usable answer sheets were returned and used as the raw data for this study. The data were tabulated and subsequently the raw scores were analyzed by means of a t-test program written and executed at the University of South Carolina computer center.

The data gathering instrument was the Stern Activities Index (Form 1158) authored by George C. Stern and copyrighted in 1958. It is a 300 item questionnaire to which respondents indicate whether they "like" or "dislike" each of the 300 activities listed. Scoring yields 30 traits which in various combinations yield 12 Factors. The twelve personality factors were extracted in a principal components-equamax analysis devised by David Saunders (Stern, 1963). The 12 Factors and a description of each follows (Stern, 1963, p.14):

Personality Factor Definitions

Factor 1. Self-Assertion. This factor reflects a need to achieve personal power and socio-political recognition. It is based on items which emphasize political action, directing or controlling other people, and the acceptance of roles involving considerable group attention.

Factor 2. Audacity-Timidity. The second factor is more personally than socially oriented. The emphasis here is on aggressiveness in both physical activities and in interpersonal relationships. It is of interest that this personal aggressiveness should also be associated with a high level of interest in science.

Factor 3. Intellectual Interests. The factors with the highest loadings in this dimension are based on items involving various forms of intellectual activities. These include interests in the arts as well as the sciences, both abstract and empirical.

Factor 4. Motivation. This factor, like 1 and 2 above, represents another form in which need achievement may be expressed. Here, however, are the more conventional forms of striving involving elements of competitiveness and perseverance as well as of intellectual aspiration.

Factor 5. Applied Interests. A high score on this factor suggests an interest in achieving success in concrete, tangible, socially acceptable activities. The items involve orderly and conventional applications in business and science.

Factor 6. Orderliness. People with high scores on this factor have indicated a marked interest in activities stressing personal organization and deliberativeness. Although some of the items are concerned with long range planning and relatively high level time perspective, the major emphasis here is on the maintenance of ritual and routine and the avoidance of impulsive behavior.

Factor 7. Submissiveness. The preceding factor suggests a strong defensive system, based on rigid internal controls, for guarding against the expression of impulses. The Submissiveness factor also implies a high level of control, but one which is based on social conformity and other-directedness. The items emphasize humility, deference, getting along with others, keeping in one's place, etc. It is of interest that the Nurturance scale items should appear in this context, suggesting that the submissive individual's interest in supportive activities is based to a considerable extent on his own unexpressed need for such help.

Factor 8. Closeness. This factor is closely related to Factor 7, with which it shares both the Nurturance and Deference scales. However, the abasive and self-denying qualities implicit in Factor 7 are absent here. In their place is an acceptance of items which recognize one's needs for warmth and emotional supportiveness.

Factor 9. Sensuousness. The thirty items associated with this factor are concerned with activities of a sensual character. The items suggest a measure of self-indulgence along with a delight in the gratifications which may be obtained through the senses.

Factor 10. Friendliness. Persons with high scores on this factor are indicating an interest in playful, friendly relationships with other people. These interests involve simple and uncomplicated forms of amusement enjoyed in a group setting.

Factor 11. Expressiveness-Constraint. This factor stresses emotional lability and freedom from self-imposed controls. Individuals with high scores on this factor are outgoing, spontaneous, impulsive, and uninhibited.

Factor 12. Egoism-Diffidence. This factor reflects an extreme preoccupation with self. The items are concerned with appearance and comfort, as well as with fantasies in which the self obtains unusually high levels of gratification. The responses to other items in this group suggests that

reality itself is interpreted in egocentric terms, but this may be not so much a matter of autistic distortion as of narcissistic egoism.

Results

An analysis of the data reveals an overall profile for the total group of 117 counselors as shown in Table I.

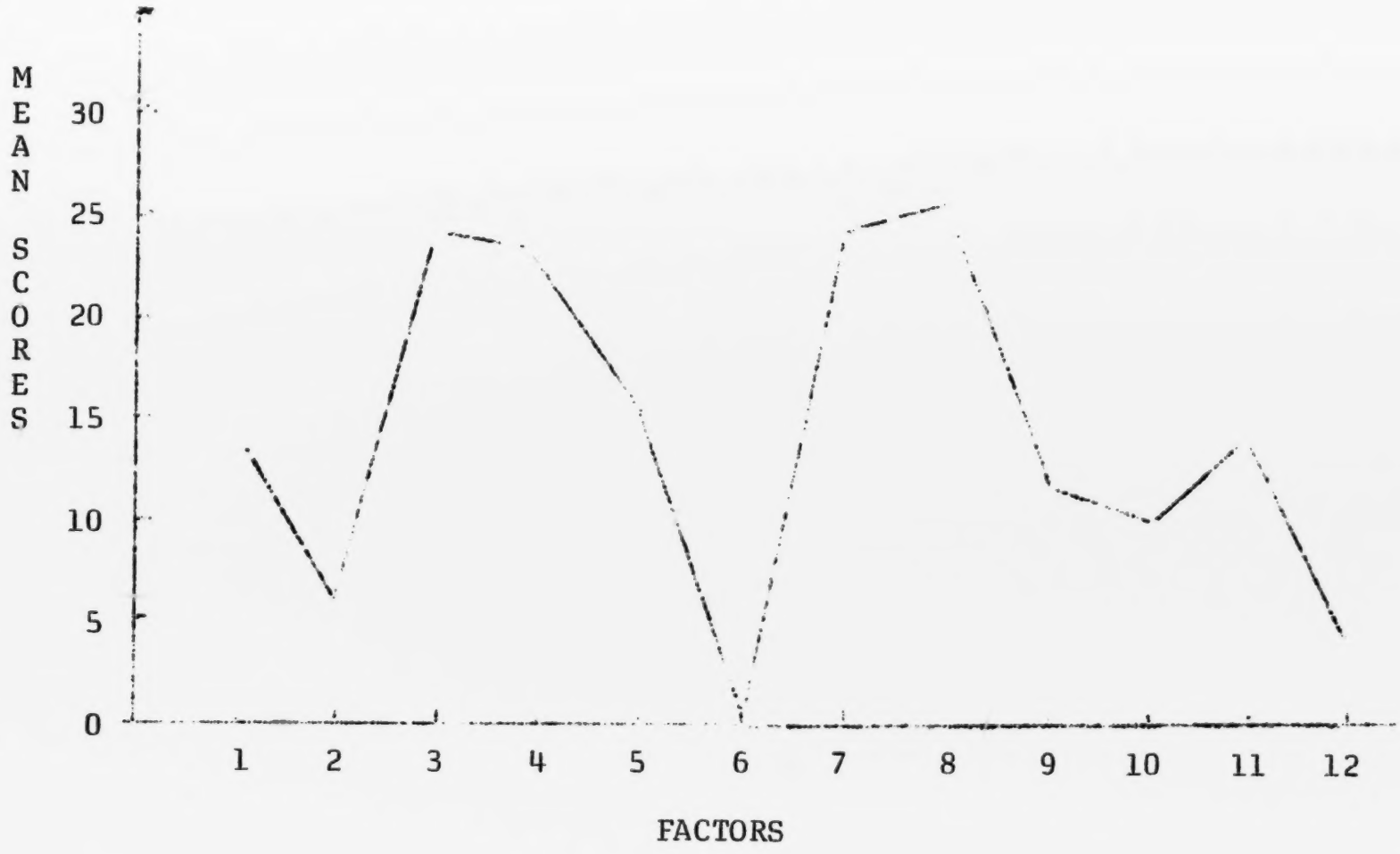
TABLE I

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR 12 STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS (N=117)

Factor No.	Means	S. D.
1	13.5	6.8
2	6.7	4.2
3	24.4	7.7
4	23.9	6.4
5	16.1	6.8
6	0.4	5.1
7	24.0	5.9
8	26.1	6.0
9	12.3	5.0
10	10.1	3.9
11	14.3	5.6
12	4.5	3.9

GRAPH I

MEAN RAW SCORES FOR 12 STERN
ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS



N=117

Graph I, showing the mean raw score profile for 117 counselors indicates scores on Factors 2, 6, 9, 10 and 12 represented relatively low points. This would point toward (according to the Factor definitions) the counselors as being non-aggressive in both the physical sciences and in interpersonal relationships, a movement away from personal organization and deliberativeness, a resistance to self-indulgence, a disenchantment with simple, uncomplicated forms of amusement enjoyed in a group setting as well as a lack of preoccupation with self. High points on the graph are Factors 3, 4, 7 and 8. These imply an interest in intellectual activities, motivation involving elements of competitiveness and perseverance, the desire for a high level of control which is based on social conformity and other directedness, and the recognition of the individual's need for warmth and emotional supportiveness.

Tables II through XI give the results of statistical analysis relating to question 2 and its subparts. The results of the t-test analysis are given with significant differences indicated. A two-tailed test of significance was applied in all analyses.

Results reported in Table II give the analysis of differences between male and female counselors. A difference significant at the .001 level was noted on Factor 1 (Self-Assertion) and a difference significant at the .05 level for Factor 2 (Audacity-Timidity). On Factor 1, males indicated a significantly higher need to achieve personal power and socio-political recognition. Factor 2 differences show that males indicate more

TABLE II

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUE FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR MALE AND FOR FEMALE COUNSELORS

Factor	Mean Scores (Males N=27)	S. D. (Males)	Mean Scores (Females N=90)	S. D. (Females)	t
1	17.44	7.46	12.37	6.22	3.55***
2	8.33	4.11	6.26	4.22	2.26*
3	26.37	7.77	23.88	7.65	1.48
4	25.00	6.06	23.67	6.53	0.95
5	18.30	6.59	15.47	6.87	1.89
6	20.52	4.69	20.38	5.25	0.12
7	23.92	6.43	24.08	5.80	0.11
8	24.81	6.60	26.54	5.89	1.30
9	12.03	5.99	12.41	4.82	0.33
10	9.74	3.70	10.19	4.02	0.52
11	14.22	5.77	14.31	5.60	0.07
12	15.11	4.32	14.29	3.85	0.95

* Significant beyond the .05 level
*** Significant beyond the .001 level

aggressiveness in both physical activities and in interpersonal relationships. No significant differences were found between male and female responses on any of the other 10 Factors.

TABLE III

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR COUNSELORS WHO ARE 45 YEARS AND OLDER AND COUNSELORS WHO ARE LESS THAN 45 YEARS OF AGE

Factor	Mean Scores (45 and over N=62)	S. D. (45 and over)	Mean Scores (Under 45 N=55)	S. D. (Under 45)	t
1	12.86	6.27	14.31	7.41	1.15
2	6.52	4.20	6.98	4.37	0.58
3	24.68	7.58	24.20	7.93	0.33
4	24.32	5.77	23.58	7.13	0.62
5	16.00	6.60	16.26	7.24	0.20
6	20.66	4.64	20.13	5.61	0.56
7	24.98	5.24	22.98	6.49	1.84
8	26.39	5.42	25.87	6.78	0.46
9	12.02	4.39	12.67	5.80	0.69
10	9.95	3.91	10.24	3.99	0.39
11	13.84	4.86	14.80	6.37	0.92
12	14.31	3.32	14.67	4.60	0.50

The analysis of scores in terms of differences in age groups (younger and older counselors), as shown in Table III, shows no significant differences.

TABLE IV

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR COUNSELORS WHO HOLD MASTER'S DEGREES AND FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT

Factor	Mean Scores (Master's N=56)	S. D. (Master's)	Mean Scores (No Master's N=66)	S. D. (No Master's)	t
1	14.45	7.31	12.71	6.32	1.38
2	6.63	4.37	6.84	4.21	0.27
3	24.05	8.17	24.82	7.32	0.53
4	24.57	7.10	23.43	5.75	0.96
5	15.70	6.77	16.51	7.01	0.64
6	20.14	5.38	20.66	4.87	0.54
7	24.23	6.33	23.87	5.56	0.33
8	26.14	6.80	26.15	5.38	0.00
9	12.09	5.83	12.54	4.35	0.48
10	10.47	4.03	9.74	3.84	0.99
11	14.30	5.82	14.28	5.47	0.02
12	14.50	4.48	14.46	3.45	0.06

Table IV, the analysis of differences of scores of counselors who hold Master's degrees and those who do not, shows no significant differences.

TABLE V

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR COUNSELORS WHO ARE GUIDANCE MAJORS AND FOR THOSE THAT ARE NOT

Factor	Mean Scores (Guid. Maj. N=50)	S. D. (Guid. Maj.)	Mean Scores (Not Guid. Maj. N=67)	S. D. (Not Guid. Maj.)	t
1	12.40	6.14	14.39	7.24	1.56
2	6.50	3.98	6.91	4.49	0.51
3	24.50	7.74	24.42	7.76	0.06
4	23.60	6.35	24.25	6.52	0.54
5	16.32	6.46	15.97	7.22	0.27
6	20.54	4.41	20.31	5.60	0.24
7	23.92	5.87	24.13	6.14	0.19
8	26.24	5.85	26.08	6.28	0.14
9	12.68	4.90	12.06	5.25	0.65
10	10.04	3.99	10.12	3.92	0.10
11	14.36	5.52	14.24	5.73	0.11
12	14.02	3.63	14.82	4.18	1.08

The scores of counselors who are guidance majors, when compared with scores of those who are not guidance majors, shows no significant differences.

TABLE VI

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR COUNSELORS WHO HAVE HAD A PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE AND FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT

Factor	Mean Scores (Had Practicum N=43)	S. D. Had Practicum)	Mean Scores (No Practicum N=74)	S. D. (No Practicum)	t
1	15.23	7.87	12.55	6.00	2.07*
2	7.70	4.45	6.18	4.08	1.88
3	25.86	8.20	23.64	7.35	1.51
4	24.90	7.54	23.43	5.67	1.19
5	17.54	7.21	15.30	6.59	1.71
6	20.65	5.35	20.27	4.99	0.38
7	24.63	6.93	23.70	5.27	0.81
8	26.30	6.99	26.05	5.51	0.21
9	12.70	6.01	12.11	4.50	0.60
10	10.47	3.97	9.87	3.93	0.79
11	14.95	5.72	13.91	5.56	0.97
12	14.49	4.70	14.47	3.49	0.02

* Significant beyond .05 level

Table VI, a comparison of the scores of counselors who have had a practicum experience with those who have not shows a significant difference on Factor 1 (Self-Assertion). Those counselors who have had a practicum reported themselves as having a need to achieve personal power and scio-political recognition.

TABLE VII

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR COUNSELORS WITH OVER 12 YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND FOR THOSE WITH UNDER 12 YEARS

Factor	Mean Scores (Over 12 N=72)	S. D. (Over 12)	Mean Scores (Less than 12 N=45)	S. D. (Less than 12)	t
1	12.16	5.96	15.82	7.62	2.88**
2	6.55	4.21	7.05	4.40	0.61
3	23.37	8.01	26.25	6.91	1.98*
4	23.59	6.58	24.61	6.18	0.83
5	15.58	7.05	17.02	6.58	1.10
6	20.18	5.42	20.80	4.57	0.63
7	24.34	6.05	23.55	5.74	0.70
8	26.29	5.97	25.91	6.30	0.32
9	11.86	4.66	13.09	5.71	1.27
10	9.67	3.99	10.77	3.77	1.47
11	13.48	5.43	15.64	5.72	2.04*
12	14.22	3.72	14.91	4.34	0.91

* Significant beyond .05 level
** Significant beyond .01 level

Table VII, reporting differences for counselors who have over 12 years teaching experience and those who have had less than 12 years, reveals significant differences on three Factors. These are Factor 1 (Self-Assertion) significant at the .01 level, Factor 3 (Intellectual-Interests) significant at the .05 level, and Factor 11 (Expressiveness-Constraint) significant at the .05 level. On all three factors, counselors with less than 12 years teaching experience had higher mean scores, reporting themselves as having a greater need to achieve personal power and scio-political recognition, having more interest in various forms of intellectual pursuits, and being more outgoing, spontaneous, impulsive and uninhibited.

TABLE VIII

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR COUNSELORS WITH 3 YEARS OR LESS COUNSELING EXPERIENCE AND FOR THOSE WITH MORE THAN 3 YEARS

Factor	Mean Scores (3 or less N=54)	S. D. (3 or less)	Mean Scores (Over 3 N=63)	S. D. (Over 3)	t
1	14.28	6.79	12.91	6.87	1.08
2	7.20	4.58	6.33	3.97	1.10
3	26.10	6.50	23.05	8.42	2.16*
4	24.33	6.09	23.67	6.73	0.55
5	17.02	6.26	15.35	7.33	1.31
6	20.41	4.02	20.41	5.91	0.00
7	23.70	5.12	24.33	6.56	0.57
8	26.48	5.12	25.86	6.82	0.55
9	12.91	5.28	11.83	4.91	1.15
10	10.24	4.27	9.95	3.65	0.39
11	14.78	5.82	13.87	5.45	0.86
12	14.82	3.94	14.19	3.99	0.85

* Significant beyond the .05 level

Table VIII shows a significant difference at the .05 level for Factor 3 (Intellectual Interests) when scores of counselors with 3 or less years of counseling experience are compared with those who have over 3 years experience. Those counselors with three years or less experience report themselves as being more concerned with intellectual activities than those who are more experienced.

TABLE IX

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR FULL-TIME COUNSELORS AND FOR THOSE WHO WORK IN GUIDANCE LESS THAN FULL-TIME

Factor	Mean Scores (Full-time N=60)	S. D. (Full-time)	Mean Scores (Not full-time N=57)	S. D. (Not full-time)	t
1	12.48	7.38	14.65	6.08	1.73
2	6.20	4.14	7.30	4.36	1.40
3	23.90	8.27	25.04	7.10	0.79
4	23.60	6.97	24.37	5.84	0.65
5	15.45	6.76	16.83	6.99	1.08
6	20.22	5.61	20.61	4.56	0.41
7	23.87	6.42	24.23	5.39	0.33
8	26.30	6.66	25.98	5.44	0.28
9	12.55	5.83	12.09	4.21	0.49
10	10.62	3.84	9.53	3.99	1.50
11	14.67	6.29	13.90	4.83	0.74
12	14.07	4.39	14.91	3.43	1.15

A comparison of scores for full and less than full-time counselors, as reported in Table IX, shows no significant differences.

TABLE X

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR COUNSELORS WHO LIST THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER CHOICE AS COUNSELOR AND FOR THOSE WHO SELECT ANOTHER CHOICE

Factor	Mean Scores (Counselor N=57)	S. D. (Counselor)	Mean Scores (Another N=60)	S. D. (Another)	t
1	11.54	5.97	15.43	7.12	3.19**
2	6.72	4.22	6.75	4.34	0.03
3	23.91	8.46	24.97	6.96	0.73
4	22.75	5.87	25.13	6.76	2.03
5	15.95	7.38	16.28	6.43	0.26
6	20.18	4.74	20.63	5.46	0.48
7	24.49	5.60	23.62	6.62	0.79
8	26.74	5.30	25.58	6.72	1.02
9	12.21	4.60	12.43	5.56	0.24
10	10.19	3.69	9.98	4.18	0.29
11	13.83	5.52	14.73	5.72	0.87
12	14.16	3.47	14.78	4.38	0.85

** Significant beyond the .01 level

Table X reveals a significant difference on Factor I (Self-Assertion) for counselors who express their long-term vocational choice as "counselor" and those who list some other choice. Those counselors who list another choice reported a significantly greater need to achieve personal power and socio-political recognition than did those who plan to remain in counseling.

TABLE XI

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t VALUES FOR TWELVE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX FACTORS FOR COUNSELORS WHO WORK WITH STUDENTS BELOW THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL AND FOR THOSE WHO WORK WITH HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL STUDENTS

Factor	Mean Scores (Below H. S. N=32)	S. D. (Below H. S.)	Mean Scores (H. S. N=85)	S. D. (H. S.)	t
1	12.53	7.67	13.54	6.55	0.00
2	6.78	4.29	6.72	4.28	0.07
3	24.75	8.71	24.34	7.36	0.25
4	23.97	7.04	23.98	6.22	0.00
5	16.53	7.46	15.97	6.69	0.39
6	20.09	4.91	20.53	5.20	0.41

TABLE XI--Continued

Factor	Mean Scores (Below H. S. N=32)	S. D. (Below H. S.)	Mean Scores (H. S. N=85)	S. D. (H. S.)	t
7	24.28	5.80	23.95	5.99	0.27
8	26.81	6.21	25.89	6.04	0.73
9	12.69	6.02	12.19	4.72	0.47
10	10.53	3.89	9.92	3.96	0.75
11	14.31	5.99	14.28	5.50	0.06
12	14.63	5.12	14.42	3.46	0.24

No significant differences were found between mean scores of counselors who are employed in High Schools and counselors who are enployed below high school level. Table XI reports the results of this analysis.

Summary and Implications

The results of an overall profile developed from responses of counselors to items of the Stern Activities Index reveals that, as a group, the 117 counselors in the study scored higher on certain factors than they did on others. Most obvious were their scores on Factors 3, 4, 7 and 8. Lowest scores were on Factors 2, 6, 9, 10 and 12. This group, then, described themselves as somewhat socially conservative, interested in intellectual activities, competitive, persevering and recognizing the need for emotional warmth.

An analysis of responses in terms of sex, age, training, career choice and experience reveals several significant differences. Male counselors described themselves as more self-assertive and audacious than did female counselors. Counselors who had practicum experience reported themselves more self-assertive than those who had not had practicum. Counselors having less than 3 years counseling experience described themselves as being more interested in intellectual activities than did those who had more than 3 years experience in counseling and counselors who described their long-term career goals as something other than counseling reported greater self-assertiveness than those who planned to remain in counseling.

The results of this study revealed some interesting outcomes which, if valid, causes one to consider implications for the field of guidance as relates to counselor personality. Most obvious is the occurrence of Factor I (Self-assertion) as a difference. This factor was definitely related to male counselors and its' description would lead one to consider it equivalent to sterotyped characteristics of masculinity. The same factor occurred among counselors who had practicum experience. This group obviously had the "push" or assertiveness it took to get desirable formal training in line with their work. Again, this factor was in evidence for those counselors who do not plan to remain in counseling as a career. This finding carries particularly important consideration with respect to many well recognized "models" for counselor characteristics which imply that the counselor needs the strength and "push" to get

things done. If this is a type of "masculinity" and if it is necessary to get training and to get things done then it is essential. If, however, the same desirable characteristic causes the counselor to leave the field to those who are less assertive then we must ask whether this is desirable, particularly in view of the present role of the counselor in the typical public school. In most cases his work is primarily guidance in nature and if he is to do an effective job he must have the fortitude and drive necessary to establish and implement his programs.

While relatively few differences were found for most characteristics there are some possible implications from this study which seem to warrant consideration of a serious nature in terms of counselor training and professionalization. Surely, the field of professional counseling could benefit from better establishing the psychological characteristics of counselors and attempting to keep the most effective counselors in the field.

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